

Success

with Heart Failure

3 KEY STEPS



VOLUME NO. 1

CONGESTIVE HEART FAILURE OUTREACH PROGRAM OF EDUCATION (COPE) NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the COPE Study

Welcome and thank-you for participating in the COPE study. This study is designed to look at different ways of teaching people about heart failure and how to look after themselves at home. Your participation will help us learn more about managing heart failure. This, in turn, may help others with heart failure. You may personally benefit by learning more about your condition and the ways to manage it at home. As a result, you may feel better.

Your research coordinator will call in 5 months to see how you are feeling. You will also be asked if you needed medical treatment in the emergency department or if you have been admitted to hospital. To help you remember these events, it is very important that you record them in your Patient Diary as they happen. You received the Patient Diary while you were in hospital along with the video, "Success with Heart Failure: 3 Key Steps." Be sure to watch the video and read the accompanying booklet. Invite your family and close friends to join you. The more others know about your condition, the better they will be able to help and support you.

Finally, you will receive this newsletter every 2 months. Each issue will feature important information about diet, medications, and other topics that will help you manage your condition. You can also read about other people living with heart failure. And be sure to try out some of the low salt recipes. We hope that you find this newsletter helpful.

Facts about Heart Failure

So, you have been diagnosed with heart failure, or congestive heart failure (CHF), as it is commonly referred. Many people with heart failure continue to

lead active lives because they have learned to take care of themselves. To do this, you will need to understand your condition and follow your treatment plan. You probably have many questions about heart failure. This article will answer some of the most common questions people ask.

What is heart failure?

Heart failure means that your heart does not pump blood as strongly as it should. It does not mean that your heart has suddenly stopped working or is about to stop working. Usually heart failure develops slowly. As the heart muscle gets weaker, many people feel tired because the heart cannot pump enough blood to the body. Many people can also get fluid build up in their lungs, making it difficult to breathe. Heart failure is a serious condition and in most cases, it cannot be cured. But with the proper medication and diet, you can live longer and feel better.

How common is heart failure?

You are definitely not alone. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada estimates there are about 330,000 Canadians with heart failure and approximately 500,000 who do not know they even have it. This illness appears to be twice as common in men than in women. Although heart failure can affect people of all ages it is more common as you get older.

What causes heart failure?

There are many different causes of heart failure. Generally, heart failure can be caused by any of the following:

- High blood pressure (especially if left untreated for a long time)
- Heart attack
- Heart valves that do not work properly
- Infections in your heart

- Excessive use of alcohol
- Certain drugs

Speak with your doctor to find out what caused you to develop heart failure. Depending on the reason, there may be other things you can do to take care of yourself.

What symptoms of heart failure might I experience?

Symptoms of heart failure will depend on how well your heart pumps and on how well you manage your condition. It is very important to pay close attention to how you feel. An increase in symptoms means your condition is getting worse and you need to take action. Do not wait until you are really sick to call your doctor.

The most common symptoms you may experience include:

- tiredness or a decrease in your ability to do your usual activities
- sudden weight gain (due to fluid build up)
- trouble breathing, especially when physically active or when lying down flat
- swelling in the legs, feet, hands or stomach
- cough or chest congestion
- loss of appetite, nausea
- bloating of the stomach

What are some tests that my doctor may do?

Your doctor may use a number of tests to diagnose heart failure and to see how you are doing with your treatments. In addition to a medical exam and blood tests, some of the other tests your doctor may order include:

Chest X-ray: allows your doctor to look for fluid in your lungs and at the size of your heart (it often gets larger with heart failure).

Echocardiogram (“echo”): this test is used to see how well your heart is pumping blood. The pumping action of your heart is measured by the **ejection fraction (EF)**. The EF measures how much blood is pumped out each time the heart beats. Normally, the EF is about 60%. In people with heart failure this number may be much lower (less than 40%). This measurement can help guide your care. The echocardiogram also tells your doctor how well the heart valves are working.

Electrocardiogram (ECG/EKG): records the electrical activity of your heart. It tells your doctor how fast your heart is beating, and if it is beating

regular and steady.

Stress Test: tells your doctor how well your heart works under pressure. There are different kinds of stress tests. Some require you to exercise by walking on a treadmill.

What can I do to manage my heart failure?

Fortunately, there are many things that you can do to help your heart work easier. By doing so, you will feel better and reduce the chance of being hospitalized. Most heart failure treatment plans include the following:

- limit salt in your diet
- limit the amount of fluid you take in during a day
- weigh yourself daily to see if you are retaining fluid
- monitor your symptoms daily
- take your medications as prescribed
- avoid alcohol and smoking
- get plenty of rest
- exercise as recommended by your doctor

At first, many people find it hard to do make changes in their life. It is not easy, but if you follow your treatment plan, you will feel better. You can also prevent your heart failure from getting worse and having to go to the hospital. You may also live longer. Ask a family member or close friend to help you, and of course, your doctor, pharmacist and nurse are there to help too.

In the next two issues of the COPE Newsletter we will discuss a low salt diet and medications in more detail. The more you know about your condition, the easier it will be to follow your treatment plan.

Daily Weights – Why are they so Important?

You may be wondering why your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse has told you to weigh yourself every day. Most people weigh themselves to see if they have gained or lost fat. Although maintaining a healthy body weight is a good idea for everyone, this is not the reason people with heart failure must track their weight so closely.

People with heart failure can often have a build up of fluid in their lungs, legs, feet, hands or abdomen. This happens because the heart is weakened and cannot pump blood as well. As a result, things “back

-up” and fluid starts to collect in places where normally it should not. This can make you feel very tired and very short of breath, and may require you to stay in hospital to clear the extra fluid.

How can you prevent this from happening? Follow the **3 Key Steps to Success with Heart Failure** you learned about in the video:



1. Avoid salt: salt acts like a sponge and retains fluid. The extra fluid makes it harder for your heart to work. One of the main reasons people have to come to hospital for heart failure is that they consumed too much salt.



2. Weigh yourself daily: the first sign of fluid build up is an increase in weight; as little as 2 pounds in 2 days. At this point, you may not have other symptoms like shortness of breath or fatigue. The average person can hold 8 to 15 extra pounds of fluid before developing swelling. So, by weighing yourself **every day** you will be able to detect the extra fluid very early. This will allow you to manage it at home (rather than at the hospital) and prevent the other symptoms from getting worse.

It is important to get in the habit of weighing yourself every day. Record your weight in the Weight Chart you received in your Patient Diary so that you can detect small changes in your weight. Here are a few other tips to help you get in the habit:

- use the same scale
- empty your bladder first
- weigh yourself before breakfast
- wear the same amount of clothing every time

Call your doctor if you gain more than 2 pounds (1 kg) in two days or 5 pounds (3 kg) in one week.



3. Take your medications: your medications help your heart pump stronger and prevent fluid build up in your body. Some people mistakenly stop taking their medications because they feel better, only to find the fluid building up again. Heart failure is a life-long condition and you need to take your medications exactly as directed by your doctor.

Ten years ago, at the age of 53, I was diagnosed with heart failure. I was so ill and weak that it took a

Heartwise Advice

Carry a list of your medications in your wallet

A medication list can prove to be the most valuable item to carry around in your wallet at all times. Record all your medications, the amount you take, and your medical conditions (your pharmacist can help you make a list). Keep the list with your health card in your wallet. In the event of an emergency, when you may be too upset to remember, or even too ill to speak, your medication list will provide the necessary information.

Straight From the Heart



month in the hospital before my condition was brought under control. The news of my illness was devastating. As a housewife and a mother of four children, I had responsibilities. My husband has just retired and instead of starting out with our best foot forward, we had many serious adjustments to make. I was wrought with guilt so that my mental state wasn't much better than my physical condition. My husband became my caregiver at home and during that first month, he took care of everything except my personal hygiene. It was a lot to ask of him but he never complained. When I became stronger, I was able to resume most of my chores except washing floors and vacuuming. A lot has changed in our life. We don't go out where people smoke. Any smokers visiting our house, smoke outside. I am on 5 heart medications and seldom miss a dose. To me, it is my lifeline. I try to stay "heart smart" in our cooking but there are times we both cheat. My exercise is limited but I try to do my best. I weigh myself regularly and I don't often exceed the recommended fluid intake.

Three years ago, my husband had a heart attack and quadruple bypass surgery. We've been through a lot together and learned together. If I were to give advice to other heart failure patients I would tell them to be adamant about taking all their medication on time. Never quit any medication unless your doctor tells you to. Keep a positive mental attitude. That's half the battle. The other half is the faith you put in your doctor. Be thankful for the understanding of family and friends. The rest is up to you. We have only two guarantees in life: death and taxes. Grin and bear it!

From "Low Sodium Savvy" by L. Kerr, M. Kennedy, Clinical Dietitians, Nephrology



Low Sodium Meat Loaf

1 1/2 lbs	ground beef	750 g
1/3 cup	low sodium ketchup	75 mL
1/3 cup	whole wheat bread crumbs	75 mL
1	small onion, chopped	1
1/8 tsp	each: basil and oregano	dash
1/4 cup	chopped, fresh parsley	50 mL
1/4 tsp	pepper	1 mL
dash	Tabasco® sauce	dash
1	egg	1

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). In a large mixing bowl, combine all ingredients; mix well. Place in a greased 8 x 4 inch loaf pan or 1.5 litre ring mold. Shape into a loaf. Bake 40 to 45 minutes or until no longer pink in centre. Let stand a few minutes to set; invert onto a serving platter. Makes 6 servings.

Approximately 146 mg of sodium, 298 calories, 23.5 g of protein, 7.6 g of carbohydrates, 18.8 g of fat.

Seasoning Tips:

- Try adding 1 tbsp (15 mL) lemon juice to the ground beef mixture.
- Substitute the basil and oregano with 1 tsp (5 mL) poultry seasoning.
- Substitute Tabasco® sauce with 1 tsp (5 mL) chili powder. Read the label to make sure that the chili powder does not have salt as one of the ingredients.

and Renal Transplant Program, University of Alberta Hospital

If you would like to purchase a copy of this cookbook, please contact: Nutrition and Food Service, Royal Alexandra Hospital — Phone 780-477-4963. Cost \$9.95 (includes GST and shipping) (Sorry, sold out - no longer available)



Eating out

Here are some tips to help you follow your low salt diet and still enjoy dining out!

1. Be prepared: if you know you are dining out for one meal, make your other meals of the day lower in salt in case you have a higher salt choice at the restaurant. Choose a restaurant that would have more choices for you like those with salad bars and fresh food choices.
2. Ask that foods be prepared without added salt, MSG (monosodium glutamate) or soya sauce.
3. Ask for dressings and sauces on the side so you can control how much you use. Dip your fork in the dressing or sauce first then into your food, so you don't have to pour it on your food.
4. Avoid high salt items like: fried or breaded foods, dishes prepared with cheese, croutons, olives, bacon bits, sausage, tacos, and condiments such as ketchup, soya sauce, steak sauces.
5. Pizza is a high salt choice because of all of the cheese. Pasta may be a better choice. Try to choose the pizza with the least amount of salt such as a vegetarian pizza. Avoid the double cheese or meat pizzas!

You're probably thinking...then what can I eat at a restaurant? There are still lots of choices at restaurants. You cannot avoid salt completely...but the trick is to **choose WISELY**. Choose the foods that would have the least amount of salt on the menu!

Remember you might be able to make some of these foods at home with less salt!

3 Key Steps to Success SUMMARY

1. Avoid salt
2. Weigh yourself daily
3. Take your medication

By following these three key steps, you can help yourself to a healthier life.